



DATE	TIME	DEDICATION	INTENTION	CHURCH
Sun 22 <sup>nd</sup> March	9 am	5 <sup>th</sup> Sun. of Lent	Ken Bond (A)	Holy Family
Sun 22 <sup>nd</sup> March	11.15 am	5 <sup>th</sup> Sun. of Lent	Stuart Munro (LD) Parishioners	Our Lady V
Mon 23 <sup>rd</sup> March		St Turibius of Mogrovejo		The church is closed
Tue 24 <sup>th</sup> March	9 am	Weekday of Lent	S.I. Joe Collins	Our Lady V
Wed 25 <sup>th</sup> March	9 am	The Annunciation of the Lord	John & Joyce Mitchell (A)	Our Lady V
Thu 26 <sup>th</sup> March	9 am	Weekday of Lent		Our Lady V
Fri 27 <sup>th</sup> March	7 pm	<u>Via Crucis &amp; Mass</u>		Our Lady V
Sat 28 <sup>th</sup> March	12 noon	Weekday of Lent. Our Lady on Sat		Our Lady V
Sun 29 <sup>th</sup> March	9 am	<b>PALM SUNDAY</b>	Wendy Kerrigan (LD)	Holy Family
Sun 29 <sup>th</sup> March	11.15 am	<b>PALM SUNDAY</b>	Mary & Jimmy Murphy (A)	Our Lady V

**Clocks go forward one hour at 1 am on Sun 29<sup>th</sup> March**

**Exposition of the Blessed Sacrament, Confessions:**

**Tue 9.30am to 10am; Sat 11am to 12**

**Holy Rosary & Divine Mercy Devotion:**

**Tuesdays 9.30 am OLOV.**

**Baptisms, Weddings: by appointments.**

**Wednesday Club: / Tuesday Nursery: You are welcome!**

**We pray for all who are sick and elderly:**

Marie Tyrer, Ray Sherwood, Betty Maurey, Henry Henderson, Anne and Mike Quinn, Ronnie Baybut, Geoff Morrissey, Michael Hyland, Paul Blackford, Harry Caine, Sophie Caine, Christine Watts, Deacon John and Ann Crooks, Joan Callaghan, Natalie Kavanagh, Hannalor Mainey, Betty Costello, Pauline Hayes, Irene Halsall.

**We pray for those whose Anniversary occurs at this time:** Ken Bond, Ann Quinn, Mary Leeson, Kenneth Hogarth.

**We pray for those who have died:** Wendy Kerrigan.



**The Parishes of Holy Family Ince Blundell**  
**Our Lady of Victories, Hightown**

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Parish Priest: Fr Sergio Haro

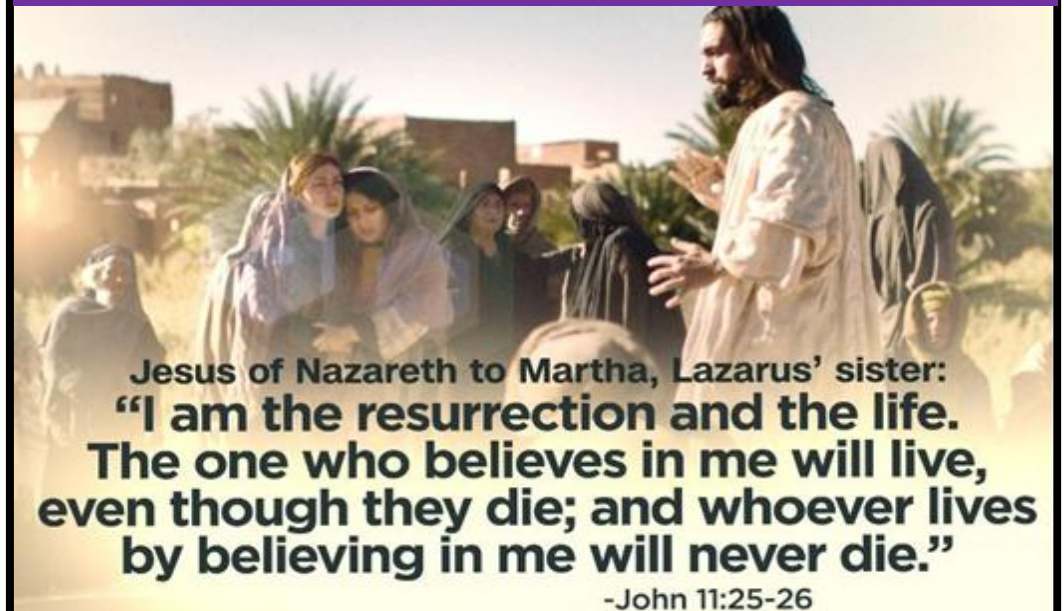
Archdiocese of Liverpool, Reg. Charity Number 1199714

OLOV, Hightown: Sort Code: 40-29-12, Account: 01544993

Holy Family: Sort Code: 40-29-12, Account: 71545094



***Fifth Sunday of Lent (A): 22<sup>nd</sup> March 2026***



Next Sunday is Palm Sunday and we will be starting Holy Week. At this point, it would do much good to look backwards on our Lenten journey towards Easter, which we started on **Ash Wednesday**, when we meditated on the right dispositions of our journey: **self-denial, almsgiving & prayer**.

- ✓ On **the 1<sup>st</sup> Sunday of Lent**, we meditated on **the temptations of Jesus** and how important it is to become ourselves, warriors of prayers.
- ✓ On the **2<sup>nd</sup> Sunday of Lent** it was the Gospel reading of **the Transfiguration** and we committed to listening to the Bible and to have it always at hand, the same way we have our mobile phone always with us.
- ✓ On the **3<sup>rd</sup> Sunday of Lent**, we heard of the encounter of **Jesus and the Samaritan woman** at the well of Jacob in Sychar. Jesus as the living water, the water of life. And we committed to live our Baptism to the full.
- ✓ Last week, the **4<sup>th</sup> Sunday of Lent**, we heard the familiar story of **Jesus healing the man born blind**, and by doing this Jesus told us that he is 'the Light of The World.'
- ✓ Today, on the **5<sup>th</sup> Sunday of Lent**: on **the raising of Lazarus from death**, we understand that this sign has a deeper meaning: Jesus is the 'life-giving' Word, He is 'the Resurrection and the Life' and the onlookers did not miss the point about who Jesus really is. The resurrection of Lazarus was not the real resurrection, he would die again, but this sign shows us that Jesus is the 'life of the world'.

**Pope Benedict** taught us that **death represents a wall** that prevents us from seeing beyond it, yet our hearts reach us beyond this wall as a desire for eternity. **Christ pulls down the wall of death and gives us the fullness of life.** He gives us a share in his life, that is our own resurrection, which we aspire while longing for Him, 'the Life of the World'.

*Fr Sergio*

## The Catholic Faith is growing fast in the world:

**UK:** For the first time in 500 years the Catholic Church outnumbered the Church of England. In London it is recorded the highest number of Catholic conversions at Easter in 15 years, since 2011, with almost 800 adults in Westminster and 590 in Southwark.

**IRELAND:** Mass attendance among young people has increased by 143% from 2020 to 2024. They reported 143% increase in weekly Mass attendance among young Catholics in the Republic of Ireland is a key finding from a March 2026 study titled "The Turning Tide? Recent Religious Trends in Ireland," commissioned by the Irish Catholic Bishops' Conference. The percentage of Catholics aged 16 to 29 attending weekly Mass rose from 7% in the 2020–2022 period to 17% in the 2023/2024 cycle. This significant uptick, described by researchers as a possible "quiet revival." Young Irish Catholics are the sixth most practicing group in Europe. The growth is particularly notable among young men and is also reflected in Northern Ireland, which remains the most religious part of the island.

**FRANCE:** This Easter, a record number of 20,000 French will be baptised in the Catholic Church. France is preparing to break a record of baptisms this Easter. Nearly 20,000 adults and adolescents will be baptised, a record number in the country. The events will occur during the Pascal Vigil and reflect a significant increase in converts to Catholicism, especially among young people. **UNIVERSITY OF NOTRE DAME:** Something historic is happening at Notre Dame! The university celebrates a record number of converts this year, marking a spiritual revival that inspires the entire campus. More and more young people are seeking a deep purpose and finding the answers they need in Catholic faith. These new converts demonstrate that, even in academic life, the heart seeks the transcendent. What motivates a student to change his life today? The answer is in the community and the search for truth. This increase in converts reflects an interesting trend in the academic sphere: students on the ground seek intellectual excellence, as well as a solid spiritual foundation. The preparation of these new converts includes months of study, reflection and prayer, culminating in Easter Vigil celebrations. News that is full of hope!

**BELGIUM:** Adult Baptisms break record, up to 30% in one year. The Belgian Bishops' Conference confirmed a significant increase in adult baptisms, with a 30% rise compared to last year. In 2015, 534 catechumens were registered, while for 2026, 689 applications have already been received—tripling the number from ten years ago. In a statement released on February 18, the bishops emphasized that Lent is a crucial time for these catechumens, who are preparing to receive Baptism at the Easter Vigil on April 4. They noted that 229 adults were baptized in 2016 and pointed out that the sustained growth of the last decade confirms an upward trend in adult conversions. Most of this year's candidates come from Brussels (248), followed by Tournai (177) and Liège (79). Their journey will begin on Sunday, February 22, with the Rite of Election, in which they will be officially recognized as eligible to receive the sacraments of initiation, making Lent a period of intense spiritual preparation. The Belgian Bishops' Conference has confirmed a significant increase in adult baptisms, with a 30% rise compared to last year. In 2025, 534 catechumens were registered, while for 2026, 689 applications have already been received, a figure that triples the number registered ten years ago. The bishops emphasized the importance of the start of Lent for the catechumens, who will prepare during this time to receive Baptism at Easter, which this year will be celebrated on April 4. Meanwhile, the number of adults requesting baptism in the country continues to grow year after year.

**NETHERLAND:** The number of adults converting to Catholicism in the Netherlands grew by about 40% between 2023 and 2024 from approximately 455 in 2023 to 630 in 2024. The increase occurs even in one of Europe's most secularized countries and is part of a growth observed in other European nations as well.

**MALAYSIA:** More than 1,600 people prepare to become Catholic in a predominantly Muslim country. While many claim that faith is disappearing worldwide, a quiet story emerges from Asia. In Malaysia, a country where Islam is the majority religion, hundreds of people are preparing to enter the Catholic Church during the upcoming Easter Vigil. The numbers speak for themselves. In the Archdiocese of Kota Kinabalu, more than 800 people will receive the sacraments of Christian initiation. In the Archdiocese of Kuala Lumpur, more than 600 catechumens are preparing for Baptism. And in the Diocese of Penang, 230 new faithful will join the Church.

**SOUTH KOREA:** Incredible but true: The Catholic Church grew by 1200% in South Korea. The Catholic Church has grown 1,200% in the last 50 years in this country. The Catholic Church maintains an active and structured presence within the South Korean Armed Forces through the Catholic Military Ordinariate responsible for the spiritual accompaniment of soldiers, recruits, and their families throughout the country. Currently, dozens of military chaplain priests exercise their ministry directly in the units. The number of Catholics in South Korea has increased by about 1200% in the last 50 years. In the 1960s there were approximately 500,000 Catholics; today there are about 6 million. They went from a very small group to about 11% of the population. The explosive growth occurred mainly between the 1970s and 2000s.

**UNITED STATES OF AMERICA:** Catholics outnumber Protestants in Generation Z. A historic shift in the religious landscape of the United States: for the first time, Generation Z registers more young Catholics than Protestants. Data from the Cooperative Election Study (2023) shows that 21% of Gen Z youth identify as Catholic, surpassing the 19% who declare themselves Protestant — an unprecedented reversal in a country traditionally with a Protestant majority. The phenomenon occurs amidst a general decline in religiosity among young people, but it is noteworthy for the stability — and even slight growth — of Catholic identity, while Protestant affiliation shows a sharp decline. A similar trend is also observed in the United Kingdom, where young practicing Christians identify primarily as Catholic. Even in times of secularization, the data reveals that the Catholic faith continues to find space and resonance among new generations.

**CONCLUSION:** Behind every number is a story. People who discovered Christ. Families who began to ask questions. Hearts that found in the Gospel a life-transforming truth. The Easter Vigil, the holiest night of the year for Christians, has always been the moment when new believers are born into the life of grace through Baptism. And these conversions remind us of something very important: The Church doesn't grow solely through strategies or campaigns. **It grows because Christ continues to call hearts.** Even in places where Christians are a minority. Even in cultures where following Christ can be a challenge. **Each new baptism is a sign of hope for the entire Church,** and also it is a question for those of us who have already received the gift of faith: **Are we living our Baptism with the same joy and resolve as those who are discovering Christ for the first time today?**

## LITURGY OF THE WORD FOR THE 5<sup>th</sup> SUNDAY OF LENT + CYCLE A

### **First reading: Ezekiel 37:12-14**

Thus says the Lord GOD: Behold, I will open your graves and raise you from your graves, O my people. And I will bring you into the land of Israel. And you shall know that I am the LORD, when I open your graves, and raise you from your graves, O my people. And I will put my Spirit within you, and you shall live, and I will place you in your own land. Then you shall know that I am the LORD; I have spoken, and I will do it, declares the LORD.:

*The word of the Lord*

### **Second reading: Romans 8:1-11**

Brothers and Sisters: Those who are in the flesh cannot please God. You, however, are not in the flesh but in the Spirit, if in fact the Spirit of God dwells in you. Anyone who does not have the Spirit of Christ does not belong to him. But if Christ is in you, although the body is dead because of sin, the Spirit is life because of righteousness. If the Spirit of him who raised Jesus from the dead dwells in you, he who raised Christ Jesus from the dead will also give life to your mortal bodies through his Spirit who dwells in you.

*The word of the Lord*

**Gospel Acclamation:** Glory to you, O Christ, Son of the living God. I am the resurrection and the life, says the Lord.

*Everyone who believes in me shall never die. Glory to you, O Christ, Son of the living God.*

### **Gospel: John 11:1-45**

At that time: A certain man was ill, Lazarus of Bethany, the village of Mary and her sister Martha. It was Mary, who anointed the Lord with ointment and wiped his feet with her hair, whose brother Lazarus was ill. So the sisters sent to him, saying, 'Lord, he whom you love is ill.' But when Jesus heard it he said, 'This illness does not lead to death. It is for the glory of God, so that the Son of God may be glorified through it.'

Now Jesus loved Martha and her sister and Lazarus. So, when he heard that Lazarus was ill, he stayed two days longer in the place where he was. Then after this he said to the disciples, 'Let us go to Judea again.' The disciples said to him, 'Rabbi, the Jews were just now seeking to stone you, and are you going there again?' Jesus answered, 'Are there not twelve hours in the day? If anyone walks in the day, he does not stumble, because he sees the light of this world. But if anyone walks in the night, he stumbles, because the light is not in him.' After saying these things, he said to them, 'Our friend Lazarus has fallen asleep, but I go to awaken him.' The disciples said to him, 'Lord, if he has fallen asleep, he will recover.' Now Jesus had spoken of his death, but they thought that he meant taking rest in sleep. Then Jesus told them plainly, 'Lazarus has died, and for your sake I am glad that I was not there, so that you may believe. But let us go to him.' So Thomas, called the Twin, said to his fellow disciples, 'Let us also go, that we may die with him.'

Now when Jesus came, he found that Lazarus had already been in the tomb four days. Bethany was near Jerusalem, about two miles off, and many of the Jews had come to Martha and Mary to console them concerning their brother. So when Martha heard that Jesus was coming, she went and met him, but Mary remained seated in the house. Martha said to Jesus, 'Lord, if you had been here, my brother would not have died. But even now I know that whatever you ask from God, God will give you.' Jesus said to her, 'Your brother will rise again.' Martha said to him, 'I know that he will rise again in the resurrection on the last day.' Jesus said to her, 'I am the resurrection and the life. Whoever believes in me, though he die, yet shall he live, and everyone who lives and believes in me shall never die. Do you believe this?' She said to him, 'Yes, Lord; I believe that you are the Christ, the Son of God, who is coming into the world.'

When she had said this, she went and called her sister Mary, saying in private, 'The Teacher is here and is calling for you.' And when she heard it, she rose quickly and went to him. Now Jesus had not yet come into the village, but was still in the place where Martha had met him. When the Jews who were with her in the house, consoling her, saw Mary rise quickly and go out, they followed her, supposing that she was going to the tomb to weep there. Now when Mary came to where Jesus was and saw him, she fell at his feet, saying to him, 'Lord, if you had been here, my brother would not have died.' When Jesus saw her weeping, and the Jews who had come with her also weeping, he was deeply moved in his spirit and greatly troubled. And he said, 'Where have you laid him?' They said to him, 'Lord, come and see.' Jesus wept. So the Jews said, 'See how he loved him!' But some of them said, 'Could not he who opened the eyes of the blind man also have kept this man from dying?'

Then Jesus, deeply moved again, came to the tomb. It was a cave, and a stone lay against it. Jesus said, 'Take away the stone.' Martha, the sister of the dead man, said to him, 'Lord, by this time there will be a smell, for he has been dead four days.' Jesus said to her, 'Did I not tell you that if you believed you would see the glory of God?' So they took away the stone. And Jesus lifted up his eyes and said, 'Father, I thank you that you have heard me. I knew that you always hear me, but I said this on account of the people standing around, that they may believe that you sent me.' When he had said these things, he cried out with a loud voice, 'Lazarus, come out.' The man who had died came out, his hands and feet bound with linen strips, and his face wrapped with a cloth. Jesus said to them, 'Unbind him, and let him go.'

Many of the Jews therefore, who had come with Mary and had seen what he did, believed in him.

*The Gospel of the Lord*

Source: Universalis App – New Lectionary

## STATIONS of the CROSS

**Friday evenings at 7 pm** at OLOV Church, Hightown. **Please come and join us.**